



'GRETCHEN'

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ffor out of olde felles ab men seith
Cometh al this newe con fiseer to pere
And out of olde bores in good feith
Cometh al this newe science that men here

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UM DALLAM ARMES

Gretchen. By W. B. Gilbert.

Presentation copy from the author.

To Lady Charlotte Mount.

966

To

572

MS
GZ
187

Lady Charlotte Elliot

from a timid composer:-

who has heard one of his own
tunes played on a brass
band:-

who has insulted the memory
of Shelley:-

& committed various other
literary & musical atrocities:-
all of which he hopes may,
henceforth be forgiven & forgotten

London June 1879.

"GRETCHEN."

A Play,

IN FOUR ACTS.

BY

W. S. GILBERT,

*Author of "Pygmalion and Galatea," "The Palace of Truth,"
"The Wicked World," "Sweethearts," "Broken Hearts,"
&c., &c.*

London:

NEWMAN & Co.,

43, HART STREET, OXFORD STREET,

1879.

DEDICATED TO
MISS MARION TERRY.

TO MR. J. M. TERRY
AND HIS WIFE

NOTICE.

This piece was produced at the Olympic Theatre under the lessee-ship of Lord Londesborough, on Monday, 24th March, 1879, and was received with exceptional favour by a crowded house. On the ensuing Saturday morning, *after an experience of five nights*, the company received a fortnight's notice of dismissal, because (to quote a letter addressed to me by the ostensible manager of the theatre), "Lord Londesborough is not disposed to lose any money, and the first week barely paid its working expenses." That is to say, the company, who had laboured at rehearsal for nearly six weeks, were unexpectedly thrown out of employ, and the play, which had cost its author ten months of incessant toil, was held up to public contempt as a conspicuous failure, because the receipts of the first week (in mid-Lent) showed, not a loss, but a profit of only ten pounds per night on the working expenses. Within four days of the publication of the notice of dismissal, I ascertained that Lord Londesborough had arranged to transfer the theatre to another manager.

It is a source of incessant reproach to us who labour for the stage, that our work is careless, that we steal our plots, and that we are actuated by no worthier ambition than to make money. It is as well that those who hold us in such poor esteem should have some idea of the kind of encouragement that is occasionally meted out to us.

W. S. GILBERT.

24, The Boltons, South Kensington,
5th May, 1879.

397150

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Dramatis Personæ.

DOMINIC.

ANSELM.

FAUSTUS.

GOTTFRIED.

MEPHISTO.

AGATHA.

BESSIE.

BARBARA.

LISA.

GRETCHEN.

MARTHA.

FRIEDRICH.



NOTE.—The leading idea of this play was suggested by Goethe's "Faust." The author is indebted to that work for the scene between Mephisto and Martha in Act II. In every other respect the dialogue is original.

GRETCHEN.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Under the cloisters of a Monastery. In the centre of the Stage a Graveyard, in the graveyard, conspicuous among other tombs, is a tall monument. Procession of MONKS crosses the stage at back. Moonlight.*

DOMINIC *discovered seated, reading. To him enters ANSELM.*

DOMINIC.

Pax vobiscum, father!

ANSELM.

Benedicite!

I am rejoiced that, after many perils
By sea and land, I am once more among you.
How fares our poor sick Faustus?

DOMINIC.

By Heaven's grace,
He is, in body, well—yet much I fear
There lies some hidden canker at his soul.
When he was prostrate on a fevered bed,
The utterings of his delirium
Where rather those of some base man of sin,
Than of a holy father, vowed to Heaven.

ANSELM.

Thy news is grave indeed ; but knowest thou this
Of thine own knowledge ?

DOMINIC.

Aye, in truth I do.
I took my turn with others at his bed,
And all who watched him made the same report.
When the delirium was at its worst
His fevered brain was filled with worldly dreams,
And seemed to revel in the guilty joys
That he for once and all had long forsworn.
Now at a gaming table, flushed with wine,
And swearing roundly that the dice were loaded ;
Now at a drunken revel, trolling forth

Ungodly songs that set mine ears ablaze ;
Now at the chase ; now breathing words of love
Into the ears of some fair wanton ; then
Invoking curses on her wantonness !

ANSELM.

But spake he never of the holy life
That he is sworn to lead ?

DOMINIC.

Nay, never once,
Unless it were to curse the evil haste
That led him to it.

ANSELM.

Come hither, son.

The kindly brothers who attended thee
In thy delirium have no light cause
To think that, though thy priestly ministries
Are to the letter faithfully performed,
Thy heart is bent on worldly matters still.

FAUSTUS.

Of what do they complain? Can any say
That I have failed in my observances?
That I have spoken ill of any man?
That I live not a chaste and sober life?
That I am loth to pray with dead and dying?
Are not my priestly duties well discharged?

ANSELM.

Would that all priests within these sacred walls
Took thee for an ensample in these matters.
But who can read the inmost heart of man?
The lips may move in prayer, and but the lips.
Speak to me frankly—tell me by what means
Thou wast induced to quit the world without,
Its fleeting pleasures and its lasting pains,
For the pure calm of these monastic shades?

FAUSTUS.

Oh father, holy father, bear with me,
My heart is very sore !

ANSELM.

Come—tell me all,
Fear nothing ; speak to me as to thyself.

FAUSTUS.

How shall I speak to such an one as thou
Of an intense and all believing love,
Betrayed, abandoned, trampled under foot ?
Of pure and simple faith in one fair woman—
Unswerving faith—faith, absolute and whole—
And of the deadly agony that came
Of finding that well-trusted woman false ?
All the more false for the divine truth-promise
That played upon her fair and placid brow ;
All the more false for the hot passion-vows,
That leaped, in hurried whispers, from her lips !
I gave her all the wealth of my rich heart—
I lived upon her love—I fed my life
With the sweet poison of her lying lips
In utter trust. God help me !—one dark day,

In the high noon of all my happiness,
My heart upraised to Heaven, in gratitude
For the fair promise of our coming life,
She left me, for a man whose proffered love
Had formed the theme of many an idle jest.
But he was rich—and so—she went to him !
At once the open volume of her life
Lay plain before me, and I read therein,
That she was—womankind !
Mad with the frenzy of a shipwrecked heart,
And, with the old fond test-words of our love
Ringing a mocking echo through my brain,
I cursed the world and all the women in it,
And here sought sanctuary !

ANSELM.

Ah, my son,
This haven from the tempests of the world
Should not be sought in bitterness of soul.
Only the pious heart, turned heavenwards
From very love of Heaven, will here find rest,
Till Heaven, in its good time, shall garner it.
But take good heart. I'll talk with thee to-night,

And, with the help of Heaven, give thee good counsel.

Be comforted—the world without is hollow,
As thou, in thine hot wrath, did'st reckon it.
Thy wrath had reason in't. Be comforted !

[*Exit* ANSELM.

FAUSTUS.

“ Only the pious heart, turned heavenwards
From very love of Heaven ! ” Fit formula
To typify the fierce, embittered cynic,
Who, in heart-misery, sought refuge here,
As a poor, worried, over-hunted fox,
Cursing his persecutors, runs to earth
To lick his bleeding flanks in sulky peace,
And brood, in solitude, on men and dogs !
No hope ! no hope ! no hope ! For life entombed—
For life cut off from life—a breathing man,
Wrapped in a winding-sheet of his own weaving !
A living heart, inurned and sepulchred !

[*Enter* GOTTFRIED, *disguised as a monk.*

GOTTFRIED.

Good brother, *pax vobiscum.*

FAUSTUS.

Benedicite !

GOTTFRIED.

Art thou the monk who, in the world without,
Was known as Faustus ?

FAUSTUS.

Aye, the very same.

GOTTFRIED.

I am a travelling Dominican
Sent to thee by the Prior of our Order ;
Who, having heard much scandalous report
Of thy most heinous immoralities,
Instructs me, with all friendly privacy,
To urge thee to amend thy naughty life.
Or, if thou findest this impossible
(As there is reason to believe thou mayst),
So to conceal and cloke thy wanton ways,
That thou, at least, mayst seem to be a saint,
And so afford no handle to the grasp
Of the all-watchful enemies of our Church.

FAUSTUS.

Strange mission, strangely worded, holy brother !
What doth your Prior allege ? And by what right

Dares he to counsel such hypocrisy ?

Whence comes his information ?

GOTTFRIED.

From Sir Gottfried.

A very blameless, pure, and godly knight ;
Who, once a boon companion of thy follies,
Hath since repented, and indicted thee
For that, despite thy vows of continence,
Thou livest the old life.

FAUSTUS.

Now, by the Truth,
Never lied Gottfried thus !

GOTTFRIED.

Nay, by the Truth,
I speak his very words—and here's the proof !
[Throws off his robe, and appears as a young soldier.]

FAUSTUS.

Gottfried ! Is this indeed my dear old friend ?

GOTTFRIED.

The same indeed. Bound for the wars again !
My troop of horse is passing through the town,

And hearing that thou wast within these walls,
I asked for thee. A bearded brother came,
And with scant courtesy, he bade me wait
Thy leisure in the great refectory.
There, much perplexed to know with what address
I might most ceremoniously greet
So eminent a theologian,
I saw this rag-bag hanging on a peg—
Thou knowest the rest.

FAUSTUS.

I am rejoiced to see thee,
Despite thine ill-timed jest.

GOTTFRIED.

And this Faustus!
The old dare-devil Faustus! Marvellous!
When last I saw thee, thou wast bravely clad
In coat of cramoisie, and by thy side
There swung the readiest rapier in the town!

FAUSTUS.

Hush, hush, these vanities are past and gone,
And many others with them!

GOTTFRIED.

By-the-bye,

There was a black-eyed wench—a plump brown
rogue,

With full red lips, and twinkling ankles, too—

Dost recollect her ankles? No? *I* do!

Let's see—her name. What was the wench's
name?

Has she gone with the other vanities?

FAUSTUS.

I prithee stop thy tongue. I loved the girl
And she was false to me. My heart died out.

I sickened of the world and woman's love,
And here sought refuge.

GOTTFRIED.

Oh, for shame! for shame!

To hold the world to be a hollow world
Because one heart has proved a hollow heart!
Now hear a parable. But ten days since,
A swindling huckster gave me a bad ducat;
Now, by my head, I thought that ducat good:
It seemed so fair and bright—and as it lay

Upon my open palm, I read thereon
A pious legend, drawn from Holy Writ!
Believing that a ducat, wreathed about
With such a goodly warrant, could not lie,
I loved that ducat, and I trusted it!
Well, well, the ducat proved to be but base.
With a deep sigh—for gold is scarce with me—
I cast that ducat from me. But did I,
On that account, forswear *all* ducats? No!
My love for ducats—and my need of them—
Are just as keen as ever!

FAUSTUS.

Peace, old friend.

I am a priest, who once forswore the world
Because he thought all women false. Think you
That being priest, and sitting day by day
In yon confessional,
I have seen cause to hold my judgment cheap?

GOTTFRIED.

Plague on thy judgments! Judgments ready-made
Are counterparts of garments ready-made,
That fit some well, some ill, some not at all.

I know a maiden, scarce eighteen years old,
Fair as the apple-green of early dawn,
Pure as the summer sun of southern heaven ;
A psalm incarnate—an embodied prayer,
Not of the earth, yet dwelling thereupon ;
Nor yet of Heaven—although her mission be
To teach mankind that Heaven is worth the winning.

I have seen sturdy brawlers sheath their blades
To humbly doff their hats at her approach ;
And when she's fairly out of hearing, then
Draw a long breath and go their ways in peace,
As though the air were charged with loving kindness.

Rude gallants, in whose eyes all womenkind
Are but the subjects of licentious jest,
Stand back abashed as Gretchen passes by,
And hush their converse into decency.
Young wanton girls weep tears of honest shame,
And old men think of angels and the Heaven
That is to crown their closing pilgrimage !

FAUSTUS (*interested*).

Who is this maiden ?

GOTTFRIED.

My dead uncle's child,
An orphan, dwelling twenty leagues away.

FAUSTUS.

Thou lovest her ?

GOTTFRIED.

Aye, as I love the truth—
As I love purity and innocence—
As I love Heaven and the good life to come !

FAUSTUS.

Well, well—go on—she is thy kinswoman.
Thou hast a goodly presence—and I know
Thy heart is honest. Thou hast told thy love ?

GOTTFRIED.

I, dare to speak of love to Gretchen ? No !
I'm a rough soldier—barrack-born and bred.
My life's a tavern life—my closest friends
Are all rough soldiers ; and the air I breathe
Reeks with unholy jests and fumes of wine !
I, dare to speak of love to Gretchen ? Why,
My tongue would shrivel at the blasphemy !

FAUSTUS.

Why, what's all this ?

Thou'rt going from her, and thou dost not dare

To tell her of thy love ? She is the pearl

Of maidenhood, and yet thy heart is faint

Because she is the pearl of maidenhood ?

Up, man ! Take heart of grace ! Thy love is
honest,

Thy face is fair—thine heart is true and sound—

Thou art a soldier, marked for fair reward.

Up, man ! Take heart of grace ! No fretting
vows

Stand betwixt *thee* and such an earthly heaven !

To think that this most miserable man

Has all this boundless treasure in his reach,

And hesitates to grasp it ! Up, faint heart !

Come, boot and saddle, and away with thee,

Ere some more daring and less worthy suitor

Step in to take her from thee !

GOTTFRIED (*astonished*).

By my hand,

'Twas Faustus spake then—not the holy friar !

FAUSTUS.

I spake as man to man—as friend to friend.
I love thee ; and if such a woman live
As thou hast pictured, take her to thine heart
While yet thou may'st. Had I loved such an one
I should not now be wearing out my life
In these sad solitudes !

GOTTFRIED (*sadly*).

There spake the heart,
And not the lips.

FAUSTUS (*recollecting himself*).

May Heaven pardon me !
I knew not what I said !

GOTTFRIED.

My dear old friend !
Come, I must say farewell, my troop awaits me.
We ride through Lutzen. I shall see her there.
[*trumpet heard without.*]
“To horse !” Dost know the sound ?

FAUSTUS (*sighing*).

I know it well !

GOTTFRIED.

I'll warrant me thy trusty soldier-heart
Bounds as of old, despite thy monkish frock,
At the old trumpet call!

FAUSTUS.

These things are past!
May God protect thee in thine enterprise,
And give thee safe and speedy conduct home.

GOTTFRIED.

Amen to that. So, Faustus, fare thee well!

[*Exit* GOTTFRIED.]

FAUSTUS.

He's gone! gone forth to the fair, fruitful world:
The world of life and love, the world of hope,
Of open hearts and unchecked sympathies!
Oh, foolish priest, misleading and misled,
Poor trickster, ever duping, ever duped—
Cheating thyself into a mad surrender
Of all that youth holds dearest; cheating others
Into blind trust of thy sincerity!
Thou art a man—the world was made for men!
Thou hast a heart—thy heart is idle here!

A curse on all this maddening mummary,
This life-long lie, this living catacomb !
Earth, heaven, hell, whichever hears me now,
Come to my call, and bring me back to life !

[*Thunder, lightning ; MEPHISTO appears.*

FAUSTUS.

Merciful Heaven defend me ! Who art thou ?
What dost thou here, and what would'st thou
with me ?

MEPHISTO.

You called me, and I came in hurried haste,
Lest the two other powers whom you invoked,
Should be before me in the race.

FAUSTUS.

Who art thou ?

MEPHISTO.

A travelling clock-cobler, who repairs
The moral time-piece when it's out of order.

FAUSTUS.

A truce to riddles.

MEPHISTO.

Then I'll speak more plainly.

Some clocks are well made, some are roughly
fashioned,

And need much tinkering ; springs weaken, snap,

Wheels loosen, dust gets in, and time is lost ;

Men lose all faith, and put the liar by

As something worse than useless. I, clock-cobler,

Wind up the moral time-piece, make new faces,

Repair this wheel, that spring, mend here, mend
there ;

In short, I do my very best to make

A time-piece that has lost its character

Pass for a trusty herald of the hour.

FAUSTUS.

Get thee behind me, for I know thee now,

Despite thy fair disguise !

MEPHISTO.

Oh, pardon me,

I've no disguise: This is my own fair form.

I'm not the horrible embodiment

You doctors of the Church have painted me—

A very Satyr, with a dragon's tail—
A nursemaid's devil ! Oh, shortsighted priests,
My policy is to allure mankind,
Not to repel them !

FAUSTUS.

What would'st thou with me?

MEPHISTO.

A proper question ! Why, you summoned me !
It is a leading principle with me
That no one ever needs to call me twice.

FAUSTUS.

I spake in haste. I did not weigh my words.

MEPHISTO.

That may be, or it may not be. I have
A character for promptness to maintain,
And can't afford to risk my reputation
On the mere hazard that your words were idle.

FAUSTUS.

You've saved your character, and so depart—
Prime cause of sin—accursed of God and man !

MEPHISTO.

Unjust—illogical ! But you're a churchman.
Prime cause of sin ! Why, evil comes from good,
As oft as good from evil. Motives ? Pooh !
Why, half the ills that vex mankind arise
From motives that are unimpeachable.

FAUSTUS.

If goodly seed, well sown, bear evil fruit,
The fault is scarcely with the husbandman.

MEPHISTO.

But why sow any goodly seed at all,
If evil may result from doing so ?

FAUSTUS.

Why try to stop my sowing goodly seed,
If it produce the crops that please you best ?

MEPHISTO.

He's hit the blot ! This clear-cut brain of his
Is wasted in this world of half-an-acre !
Cast off thy frock—come forth with me. The man
Who can detect my sophisms at a glance
Is safe enough, without the galling chains
That fetter him to prayer and solitude.

Come forth with me ;
There's a fair field without these gloomy walls
For such a brain as thine—a merry world,
Teeming with song and dance—a grateful world,
Where gallant deed and brilliant enterprise
Meet with their due reward—a loving world,
Where kindred hearts may chime in unison.
Come forth with me !

FAUSTUS.

Peace—get thee hence away.

My vows are taken !

MEPHISTO.

Aye, and so they are !

Vows not to dream of the gay world without—
Vows not to sigh for temporal vanities—
Vows so to chasten, quell, and mortify
Your natural craving for a woman's love,
That it shall sicken, wither, starve and die
From lack of sustenance !
Rare vows, and rarely kept, I make no doubt !
Why, man, you break them every day you live ;
You break them when you weep upon the grave

Of broken hopes and blighted sympathies—
Of wrecked ambitions, and the hundred tombs
That crowd this solitary sepulchre!
You break them when you let your memory loose
To revel in the rich, ripe luxury
Of luscious lips, soft cheeks and glancing eyes,
The violet breath—the press of warm, soft hands,
Or the crisp frettle of disordered hair,
That woo'd your flaming cheek, as, half ashamed,
The maiden nestled, blushing, on your breast—
And yet you plead your vows! Like some I know
Who pray for mankind in the aggregate,
And damn them all in detail!

FAUSTUS.

Tempt me not.

I left the world of women for these walls,
Because I found a woman false as thou—
I'll not return.

MEPHISTO.

Illogical again.

“As one is so are all.” Sound argument!
You gather generals from particulars

Like all your brood. Why, there's no harm in women.

I didn't make them ! They're my deadliest foes !
Why, he who of his own unfettered will
Cuts himself off from pure communion
With blameless womanhood, withdraws himself
From a far holier influence than he finds
Within these sad and silent solitudes.

FAUSTUS.

Strange sentiments from such as thou !

MEPHISTO.

For that

We devils, as you churchmen please to call us,
Are not the simple folk you take us for ;
We are shrewd fellows in our homely way,
And look facts in the face. I know a maid,
A fair and gentle girl—the pink and bloom
Of all that's loveliest in maidenhood,
Whose simple truth and pure and blameless life
Have done my cause more harm in eighteen years
Than all the monks in Christendom can mend !

FAUSTUS.

Is this indeed the truth ?

MEPHISTO.

Aye, though I tell it.

FAUSTUS.

If there live such an one as thou hast painted—
A maiden—pure as the blue breath of heaven,
Into whose virgin heart no dream of ill
Hath ever crept—the bloom of whose pure lips
Is yet unbrushed by man's polluting touch ;
Whose life is open as the very truth—
A perfect type of blameless maidenhood,
Take me to her, and I *will* learn of her.

MEPHISTO.

Humph! No, I'd rather not.

FAUSTUS.

And why?

MEPHISTO.

You see

We devils have our consciences. In vice
We can do nearly all that man can do,
But not quite all. There are some forms of sin
From which we shrink—and this is one of them.
I have no stomach for such worldly work.
Best get a man to help you.

FAUSTUS.

Mocking fiend,
Misjudge me not. As there's a heaven and hell,
I mean the maid no wrong. I'll take thy help,
If thou wilt give it me. But be forewarned ;
I'll make no compact with thee. Set me free,
And I will fight thee with the holy aid
Of her pure innocence. Be thou forewarned.

MEPHISTO.

I like your frankness ! Well, you're not the first
Who'se tried to rise to Heaven on my shoulders !
Humph ! I don't know. I am a match for *you*.
But, you and she allied ! The odds are heavy !
Well, I'm a student still, and always glad
To glean experience when and how I can.
I'm curious to see how this will end ;
If *for* me—good ; but if against me—well,
I shall but lose *you*, and you're no great stake.
And so Ill risk it. See ! The maiden comes !

[*A vision of GRETCHEN is seen, gliding across
the stage, through the tombstones ; she is
reading a breviary.*]

FAUSTUS (*entranced*).

Great grace of Heaven !

Is this indeed a form of mortal mould ?

Speak, tempter, speak !

MEPHISTO.

Aye, flesh and blood, like yours,
Taken, hap-hazard, from a world of women !
How say you ? Is she not exceeding fair ?
Is there not innocence in every line
Of that pure face ? Is aught more virginal
Than the sweet sadness of those downcast eyes
Bent on her breviary ? And yet withal,
There is a wondrous world of latent love
Within that maiden heart. The girl will love
As few can love, when the full time arrives ;
So take good heed, deal gently with the maid,
Or harm may come of it—and that were pity !

FAUSTUS.

If there be truth in Heaven, there's truth in her !

If there be Heaven on earth, there's Heaven here !

MEPHISTO.

Aye, verily ! Why, when I look on her,

I'm almost tempted to turn saint myself ;

What would the world do, then ! Well, what say you?

The choice is well before you. On one hand,
Quibbling chop-logic—lip and letter worship—
Flesh idly mortified—unreasoning dogma—
The shallow sophistries of means and end—
Straws split, and split, and split, and split again—
Each section in itself infallible,
And all dissentients damned ! And on the other,
Peace, charity, and mercy, simple faith,
Gentle good-will and loving kindness.
Come, priest, what say you ? Quick—my time is short.

[The Apparition raises her eyes from her book and turns to FAUSTUS, holding out her hand to him.]

FAUSTUS.

Spirit of peace—divine embodiment—
Henceforth be thou my faith—be thou my Church !
Be thou my guide, my hope, my monitress !
Henceforth the beacon-light of thy pure soul
Shall shed its light upon my onward path,
And I will follow whither it may lead !
Spirit of purity, I come to thee !

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*A Glade. On the right a precipitous descent through the stage at the back; on the left an avenue of trees.*

BARBARA, BESSIE, and others discovered; to them enters AGATHA.

AGATHA.

Oh, Bessie—Barbara! Such dreadful news!

BESSIE.

News!

BARBARA.

Quick! What is it?

AGATHA.

Lisa has returned!

Lisa, who ran away with the rich merchant

A year ago!

BARBARA.

A wicked, wicked girl!

I hope she won't come here!

BESSIE.

And have you seen her ?

AGATHA.

I met her only half an hour ago

Upon the Leipsig road !

BESSIE.

Is she much changed ?

AGATHA.

Changed ! Why, at first I couldn't trust my eyes.

You know how jauntily she bore herself—

How daintily she dressed ? Well — *that's* all
changed !

Pale, wasted to a shadow—draggletailed—

Dressed in torn rags—bare-footed, and bare-headed !

A beggar !

BARBARA.

I remember how she sneered

At my blue gown trimmed with peach-coloured
ribbon.

Well, Heaven has punished her for *that*.

BESSIE.

But say—

Did she address you ?

AGATHA.

Yes, she spoke my name.

I started, and I recognised her. Well,

I mumbled forth some words—I scarce know what—

And, all a-fluster, gathered up my skirts,

And ran as though a ghost were at my heels.

BARBARA.

And you did wisely. Honest working girls

Should shun such brazen creatures !

BESSIE.

Soft—she's here !

[LISA comes down avenue ; she is dressed in torn and travel-stained rags, as described. As she comes down the girls turn away from her.]

LISA.

Well, girls,

Do you not know me, that you turn from me ?

Or has the misery of twelve black months

So sadly changed me ?

BESSIE (*sighing*).

Yes, we know you well !

BARBARA (*spitefully*).

Too well !

LISA.

Is there no pity for me in your hearts ?

Is there no pardon for such sin as mine ?

See—I am cold and hungry—travel-worn—

Broken in spirit, humbled and forsaken.

Oh, I have paid a penalty !

BARBARA.

No doubt.

We knew you would.

BESSIE (*aside to BARBARA*).

I'm sorry for the girl ;

We've known her all our lives. With all her faults,

We loved her well, when she was one of us.

BARBARA.

When she was one of us ? Of course—because

She then *was* one of us. But when a man—

A married man—elopes with one of us

(Which happens sometimes), why that one of us

No longer claims to rank as one of us ;

And so the cause of love exists no longer.

AGATHA.

That's true, indeed !

LISA.

Have you no charity ?

Is there no eloquence to touch your hearts

In this wan, wasted form—these wretched rags ?

Why, look at me !

BARBARA.

There is a certain frock,

Blue, trimmed with peach—not much the worse

for wear—

That's humbly at your service.

[Curtseying mockingly.]

BESSIE.

Spare her, pray !

LISA.

Aye, spare me, bitter hearts ! Who can foresee ?

A year ago, I was as one of you !

Another year, and you may be as I !

So, better spare me, lest it come to pass

That you have judged yourselves in judging me.

Well, well, the river's near !

[Enter GRETCHEN.]

GRETCHEN.

Why, who is this ?

Lisa ! (*taking her hand*).

LISA.

Hold ! Ere you take my hand in yours,
Remember what I am and what I've done.
I am an outcast, cheated and betrayed.
He swore to marry me—well, I believed him,
And when I looked to him to keep his promise,
He told me of his wife. There, that's my story.
Go wash your hand !

GRETCHEN.

Poor bruised and broken heart—
Be comforted. Why, I have prayed and prayed
For thy return—and see, my prayer is heard !
Poor wanderer ! Our hearts were sore for thee,
Aye, very sore—and I remember well
How Barbara wept when the sad tidings came,
And vowed she'd rather lose her best ten years
Than this had happened.

BARBARA.

Yes, and so I would,
But it *has* happened—and the mischief's done.

BESSIE (*crying*).

I'm sure I loved her dearly !

AGATHA.

So did I !

One can't forget old times !

GRETCHEN.

Why, then be brave,
And prove that thine was no fine-weather love,
Poor penitent ! Oh, sisters, is it fit
That we should judge our sister, or withhold
The mercy that we pray for, day by day ?

LISA (*surprised*).

Oh, Gretchen, Gretchen !

GRETCHEN.

Come, poor broken heart,
Look up—we are thy sisters as of old.

BESSIE (*half sobbing*).

If Gretchen can forgive thee, who are we
That we should hold aloof ? We spake in haste ;
Our hearts were turned to thee, despite our words.

[BESSIE *kisses her, and exit.*

BARBARA.

You told me once that I'd a bitter tongue,
D'ye recollect it? Lisa, you were right.
Forgive me, please; there (*kissing her*)! Never
mind the frock,
Though bear in mind, (*to AGATHA*) I still maintain
my point,
That blue and peach go very well together!

[*Exeunt BARBARA and AGATHA.*]

GRETCHEN.

Come, dry thine eyes, and take good heart again.

LISA.

Oh, Gretchen, Gretchen! let me weep awhile!
In truth I looked for pity and for help
From them, for they and I had much in common;
But thou, so good in all, so pure, so true—

GRETCHEN.

If it be good and true to close one's heart
To sorrow such as thine, why Heaven help me,
For then I have no title to the words!
See, Martha comes. She has an angry tongue,
Although her heart is kindly. Get thee hence

Till I have spoken to her. Here is money,
Go get thee food, and then come back to me.
Take courage—Martha can refuse me nothing.
It shall go hard but when thou comest back
She'll welcome thee as I do. Fare thee well.

LISA.

Those who would pray for thee have but one prayer,
That earth be kind to thee, for Heaven is thine,
Aye, surely, surely thine. *[Exit.*

[Enter MARTHA, with basket.

MARTHA.

Drudge, drudge, drudge, drudge ! To market seven
miles,
And seven home again ! It's a hard life,
And tells upon me sorely ! All this comes
Of marrying a bad man—a bad, poor man.
But there, he's at the wars—God keep him there !
Ah, Gretchen, Gretchen, be advised by me ;
And promise me that when thy heart's in danger,
Thou'lt come to me, that I may counsel thee
Out of the wealth of my experience—
The only wealth I have. Come, promise me.

GRETCHEN.

I do (*pauses ; then timidly*). In proof of my sincerity
I will begin to-day. I *have* seen one
Whom I could love.

MARTHA (*amazed*).

Why, Gretchen, what's all this ?
Doth he love thee ?

GRETCHEN.

Aye, for he told me so.

MARTHA.

He told thee so ! And when ?

GRETCHEN.

Last night.

MARTHA.

Last night !

GRETCHEN.

Or stay—it might have been betimes this morning.

MARTHA.

Last night ! This morning ! Gretchen ! Where
was thou

Last night—this morning ?

GRETCHEN.

Why, within thy house.

MARTHA.

And there thy lover saw thee—spake to thee,
Within my house—alone—at dead of night !
Gretchen, for shame ! Art thou as other girls ?
Who is the reprobate ?

GRETCHEN.

I cannot say.

I do not think he is a reprobate.

MARTHA.

His name ?

GRETCHEN.

I do not know.

MARTHA.

His rank—his calling ?

GRETCHEN.

I cannot tell.

MARTHA.

Why, Gretchen, I'm aghast !

GRETCHEN.

Nay, I'll not plague thee with half-hidden truths,
I'll tell thee all, and thou shalt counsel me.
Last night I slept—it might have been this morn-
ing,
I cannot tell—and, as I slept, methought
That as I wandered all alone, amid
The moonlit tombs of some old cloistered square,
I saw a man, arrayed in monkish frock,
And yet (so much at variance with themselves
Are sleeping fantasies) he was no monk,
But some young errant knight of noble rank,
The very flower of gentle chivalry !
Entranced, I gazed upon him, marvelling much
That aught of mortal mould could be so fair ;
(’Twas but a dream—we cannot frame our dreams)
And as I gazed, methought he knelt him down,
And vowed himself to me, for evermore !
There—read me that !

MARTHA.

I will. Now, mark my words,
The lover whom thou seest in a dream
Will, in due season, court thee—in a dream.

And, if the courtship prosper, as it will,
Someday, perhaps, he'll wed thee—in a dream.
Then after many long and life-like dreams
Of married misery, black looks, rough words,
Hard blows and mutual discontent, thou'lt wake
And bless thy lucky stars it *was* a dream!
Dream on, my child, pray thou mayst never wake,
As I have done. Come, there is work to do.

[Exeunt together.]

[Enter FAUSTUS and MEPHISTOPHELES.]

FAUSTUS.

At last, at last—unless my heart deceives me,
Here is the glade, and that should be her house.

MEPHISTO.

Aye, that's the house that holds the guardian maid
Who is to lead you whither you should go,
And save your lordship from yourself—and me.
Henceforth that hovel is to be your church,
With savoury fumes of roast and boiled for incense
The dim recesses of the chimney corner
Will serve you as a snug confessional.
How say you? Will you enter? If you do,

You'll find the fair high priestess of the shrine
Intent upon the secular employ
Of hanging clothes to dry. Or will you wait
Until my pretty enemy is free
To enter on her spiritual functions?

FAUSTUS.

Peace! mocking spirit. Stay thy ribald tongue.
Dost thou, whom none believe, believe in none?

MEPHISTO.

Nay, I'm the most confiding soul alive.
I credit all I'm told. Not by the tongue—
Men do not speak to me with tongues. No, no.
Man keeps his words and deeds for man's behoof.
They speak a language that I cannot fathom.
I read the heart and brain, and all *they* tell me,
With childlike faith, I readily accept.

FAUSTUS.

I would my heart were as an open book,
That all might read therein! But who comes here?
By all the powers that rule mischance, 'tis Gott-
fried!
What shall I do? How justify myself
In my old comrade's eyes?

MEPHISTO.

Leave that to me.

Bear yourself boldly ; put a good face on't,
And I will frame excuses that will serve.

[*Enter* GOTTFRIED.

GOTTFRIED.

Here is the well-loved home ! Ah, Gretchen
Gretchen !

When shall we meet again ? Or shall we meet ?
God knows ! I go where death is freely dealt,
And I may fall—Well, she will weep for me.

[*Sees* FAUSTUS.

Whom have we here ? Either my senses cheat me,
Or this is Faustus ! Faustus, as I live !
Faustus unfrocked ! Faustus unsanctified !
Faustus re-butterflied in bravery !

FAUSTUS.

Aye, Gottfried, I am Faustus—in the flesh.

GOTTFRIED.

Now here's a riddle, and I wait the answer.
But yesterday thou wast a hooded monk,
A pale, cold, stern, and sour Dominican ;

A human tombstone, sculptured by thyself,
In honour of thy dead and buried follies.
To-day I find the tombstone taken down,
And all the follies risen from the dead !

MEPHISTO.

He was misled—his follies cheated him.
Believing they were dead, to all intent,
In decency he raised a monument;
But finding them alive beneath his gown,
In decency he took the tombstone down.

GOTTFRIED.

It is enough for me that thou art free.
Welcome once more to life and liberty !
(to MEPHISTOPHELES)
Sir, in the name of all good fellowship,
I thank you for your charitable office.

FAUSTUS.

Now tell me, Gottfried, wherefore art thou here ?

GOTTFRIED.

I come, as yesterday I said I should,
To bid a long farewell to cousin Gretchen.

FAUSTUS.

To Gretchen ?

GOTTFRIED.

Aye, the maid of whom I spake.

FAUSTUS.

Is *her* name Gretchen ?

GOTTFRIED.

Yes—she lives hard by,
With Mistress Martha. Faustus, thou shalt see
her,
And join with me in worship at her shrine.

FAUSTUS (*confused*).

I understand—my words have weighed with thee,
And thou hast come to tell her of thy love.

GOTTFRIED.

Not I, indeed ; despite thine eloquence,
I'm going from her for a weary while,
Maybe, for ever. That will give her sorrow,
Sorrow enough. I would not add to it
By telling her of such poor love as mine
For all the world holds dear. Some day, please
Heaven,

I shall return with honours to my name
(If honours lie within my grasp, I'll grasp them),
And then, if I've a name worth offering,
Maybe, I'll pluck up heart. Not now, not now.
But hush, she comes (*enter GRETCHEN*) Gretchen,
my sister Gretchen !

GRETCHEN.

Gottfried! I am right glad to welcome thee,
My dear, dear brother! Art thou come for long?

GOTTFRIED.

Nay, Gretchen, I am with my troop of horse.
We march to Dettingen, and being here
I stole a brief half hour to say farewell.

GRETCHEN (*alarmed*).

Thou art not going to the war?

GOTTFRIED.

No! no!

Mere frontier duty, Gretchen; nothing more.

(*Aside*) May Heaven forgive me—that's a down-
right lie!

GRETCHEN.

I breathe again. (*sees FAUSTUS*) Who is this gentleman? [*With intense surprise.*]

GOTTFRIED.

This is my very dear and tried friend, Faustus,
The truest fellow that the wide world holds.
Faustus, this is my gentle cousin Gretchen.

GRETCHEN (*agitated*).

Surely I dream again! Oh, marvellous!
The very face and form!

GOTTFRIED.

Come, Gretchen, speak.

GRETCHEN (*much agitated*).

I give you honest welcome, noble sir;
As you are Gottfried's friend, so are you ours.

FAUSTUS.

I thank you, lady.

GOTTFRIED.

Well, and is that all?

"I thank you, lady!" Come, thou shame-faced knight,

Where are thy words? Gretchen, be not deceived—
He *hath* a tongue—a very fluent tongue,
And one that serves him well, when he so pleases.

FAUSTUS.

I am not dumb from lack of gratitude.
Much as I owe to Gottfried's well-tried love,
My heavy debt is multiplied tenfold.

GOTTFRIED (*aside to FAUSTUS*).

Then, debtor, pay the tenfold debt tenfold.
Watch over her when I am far away—
Shield her from harm as though she were thy
sister,
And we'll cry quits. Thou wilt? I thank thee,
Faustus ;
I go with lighter heart ! (*aloud to GRETCHEN*) Now,
fare thee well.
God keep thee safe and sound till I return.

GRETCHEN.

Farewell, dear Gottfried—think of me at times.
My heart is full—then read it in my eyes.
May Heaven shield thee from all harm !

GOTTFRIED.

Amen.

And now to horse—nay, not another word,
Or I shall lack the heart to go at all.

Farewell—once more and only once—farewell !

[*Exit* GOTTFRIED.]GRETCHEN (*timidly*).

Sir, will you enter? Our poor home is near,
And Mistress Martha will be glad to greet you.
You are an old friend of my cousin Gottfried?

FAUSTUS.

Aye, lady.

GRETCHEN.

Nay, you must not call me “lady”;
I am a peasant girl—my name is Gretchen.

FAUSTUS.

And may I call thee Gretchen?

GRETCHEN.

Willingly.

All call me Gretchen.

FAUSTUS.

Gottfried calls thee Gretchen.

I thought he claimed a cousin's privilege.

GRETCHEN.

Does Gottfried speak of me?

FAUSTUS.

He does indeed,

And in such terms of glowing eulogy

I almost feared that he had gained thy heart.

GRETCHEN.

Feared!

FAUSTUS.

Pardon me. I spake unwittingly.

His welfare should be very dear to me,

And therefore, I should rather hope than fear.

GRETCHEN.

Gottfried has been my brother all my life.

I would not own another man as brother:

Nor would I have him aught but honest "brother."

I love him dearly—dearly. Twice a day

I say a prayer for him, and he for me.

He is my brother. Every hope of his
Is hope of mine. When trouble falls on him
It falls alike on me—he is my brother.
And when he comes—as one day he will come—
To tell me of some good and gentle girl
Who worthily has won his honest heart,
I'll throw my loving arms around her neck,
And call her “sister,” as I call him “brother.”

FAUSTUS.

Now Heaven forgive me, but those words of thine
Have freed my bosom from a load of care!

GRETCHEN.

Didst thou then think I loved him not?

FAUSTUS.

Nay, nay.

I feared thy love was more than sister-love.

GRETCHEN.

Dost thou then fear the love that tends to wedlock?

MEPHISTO (*aside*).

Not he!

FAUSTUS.

I hold that truest happiness
Is born of wedlock.

MEPHISTO (*aside*).

Bravo, celibate !

GRETCHEN.

And yet it much rejoiceth thee to know
That cousin Gottfried hath no thought of wedlock?

FAUSTUS.

Nay, maiden, it rejoiceth me to know
That cousin Gretchen hath no thought of wedlock.

GRETCHEN.

Thou dost not wish me happy, then ?

FAUSTUS.

My heart !

I would it were my care to make thee happy !

GRETCHEN.

Now I am sorely puzzled !

MEPHISTO (*aside*).

And no wonder !

GRETCHEN.

Thou wishest Gottfried happy, and me happy ;
In wedlock, only, is true happiness ;
And yet, forsooth, it much rejoiceth thee
To know that he and I are not to wed !

MEPHISTO (*aside*).

Pretty logician ! A dilemma, truly !

FAUSTUS.

Nay, Gretchen, better let the riddle rest
Till time shall solve it !

GRETCHEN.

Pray forgive me, sir.

I do not doubt thy words are learned words.
Small wonder that I cannot fathom them.

MARTHA (*without*).

Come, Gretchen ! Gretchen !

MEPHISTO (*aside*).

Bah ! she'll ruin all !
How these old ladies always interfere !

[*Enter MARTHA.*

MARTHA.

Why, who is this ?

GRETCHEN.

A friend of cousin Gottfried,
A very old and very trusty friend ;
And so, a very trusty friend of ours.

MARTHA.

We give you welcome, sir. Our home is poor,
But wholly at your service. (*aside*) By the mass,
A very straight, well-favoured gentleman !

MEPHISTO (*aside*).

She'll never leave him. I must interfere.
(*Coming forward*) Pray pardon this intrusion——

MARTHA.

Who is this ?

MEPHISTO (*to* GRETCHEN).

Do I address Dame Martha ?

GRETCHEN.

No indeed,
My name is Gretchen—this is Mistress Martha.

MEPHISTO.

A thousand pardons for my clumsy error.
Misled by a description—"tall and fair,
Eighteen and very beautiful." The words
Apply, with equal truth, to both the ladies.

MARTHA.

You're vastly civil, sir! (*aside*) Upon my word,
It rains well-spoken, proper gentlemen!

MEPHISTO.

Sisters, of course?

MARTHA.

Nay, she's my sister's child.
(*Hastily*) My sister was, by many years my senior!

MEPHISTO.

That's evident. I bring you doleful news—
Yet news not altogether dolorous;
There is a certain spice of comfort in 't—
Yet not so much of comfort, I'm afraid,
As to disguise its not unpleasant bitter.

MARTHA.

Your words alarm me! Pray forgive me, sir,
Are you a lawyer?

MEPHISTO.

I'm the prince of lawyers.

MARTHA.

I am your servant sir ! (*Curtseying*).

MEPHISTO.

I'm glad to hear it !

But pardon me, the news I have to tell
Is for your ears alone.

MARTHA

(*to GRETCHEN, who is conversing with FAUSTUS*).

Go, Gretchen dear,
And show the gentleman the Lover's Glen.

MEPHISTO.

Take heed—the path is dangerously steep—
Be sure you do not trip, my pretty maid.

GRETCHEN.

I thank you, sir. I know its pitfalls well,
And how to pass them safely. (*to FAUSTUS*) Wilt
thou come ?

FAUSTUS.

To the world's end, fair maiden, an thou wilt.

GRETCHEN (*laughing*).

Nay, I'll not pledge thee to so long a journey.
The road is short.

MARTHA.

But very perilous.

MEPHISTO.

It is, indeed !

FAUSTUS.

Wilt trust thy hand in mine ?

MARTHA.

Aye, take his hand—you will be safer so.

MEPHISTO (*aside*).

I doubt it much.

[FAUSTUS and GRETCHEN go down incline.]

MARTHA.

Now we are quite alone.

MEPHISTO.

The news I bring you is about your husband.

MARTHA.

My husband ! he's not coming back ?

MEPHISTO.

No, no—

It's not as bad as that.

MARTHA (*relieved*).

You frightened me !

MEPHISTO (*with emotion*).

He never will come back.

MARTHA.

What mean you, sir ?

MEPHISTO.

I mean that, fighting bravely 'gainst the Turks,
An arrow struck him—and——(*faltering*)

MARTHA (*affected*).

I guess your meaning !

This is sad news, indeed ! Alack-a-day,
I never wished his death ! With all his faults,
He was no worse than other husbands are !

MEPHISTO.

A most affecting tribute to his worth.
Pray pardon my emotion ; I've a heart
That melts at weeping women.

MARTHA.

Pray go on ;
I'll try to stem my tears. Left he a will ?

MEPHISTO.

He did—a very good and Christian will.

MARTHA.

He *was* a Christian !

MEPHISTO (*sighing*).

Ah ! His will directs
That you shall spend on masses for his soul,
Five hundred marks.

MARTHA (*indignantly*).

Five hundred fiddlesticks !
A wicked waste !

MEPHISTO.

Well, knowing all I know
About his mode of life, I must admit
It *is* a waste ; but so his will directs.

MARTHA.

And is that all ? Left he no parting words
Of penitence ?

MEPHISTO.

Oh, yes ; as death drew near,
He much bewailed his manifold transgressions
And said that he could die more tranquilly
Had he his wife's forgiveness.

MARTHA.

Poor dear soul !
I could forgive him, freely, everything
Except those masses !

MEPHISTO.

“ Though it's true,” said he,
“ In all our quarrels, and we'd many quarrels,
She was invariably to blame.”

MARTHA.

A lie !
A most observable and shameless lie !

MEPHISTO.

Alas, I fear that, as a rule his words
Were not distinguished by that love of truth
That you and I deem indispensable.
For instance, he declared that earning bread

To feed so many mouths took all his time,
And left no moment he could call his own !

MARTHA.

Again, a lie ! I drudged from morn to night
To feed and clothe his famished family,
While he sat all day fuddling at the ale-house !
Alas, he never cared for wife or child !

MEPHISTO.

Nay, there you wrong him. Give the deuce his
due.

Before he sailed he prayed to all the saints
To bless his arms with full prosperity ;
So that, if he in battle should be slain,
His widow yet might live in luxury.

MARTHA.

Poor soul ! poor soul ! Did Heaven so bless them ?

MEPHISTO.

Yes.

His prayer was heard. Some seven months ago
He helped to take a Turkish galley, fraught
With countless treasure.

MARTHA.

Why, that was well done.

Brave man !

MEPHISTO.

Brave man !

MARTHA.

And what got he by that ?

MEPHISTO.

His share of prize-money—twelve thousand marks !

MARTHA.

Twelve thousand marks ! a fortune in itself !

May Heaven forgive me all my angry words !

He had a brave good heart. Where is the money ?

MEPHISTO.

Ask his good heart. He never could resist

A tale of sorrow eloquently told.

MARTHA (*alarmed*).

What mean you ?

MEPHISTO.

When at Naples, shortly after,

He saw a girl—young, beautiful, but poor—

A very child, scarce seventeen years old.
His tender heart gave way ; she was so poor,
And then so very young—scarce seventeen !
He gave it all to her.

MARTHA.

All !

MEPHISTO.

Every florin.

But then, she was so young—scarce seventeen—

MARTHA.

At his old tricks ! Then there is nothing left ?

MEPHISTO.

You wrong him there ; he left a priceless treasure,
Compared with which his other paltry gains
Sink into nothingness—a charming widow !

MARTHA.

You're very good.

MEPHISTO.

I speak the simple truth.
Come, take good heart. You waste your tears upon
A man who priced you far below your worth.

You're young, and (pardon me) attractive still.
Spend one chaste year of lonely widowhood,
Then seek a better husband.

MARTHA.

As for that,
With all his faults, I might wed worse than he.
(*Sobbing*) He was a kindly fool!

MEPHISTO.

Forgiving soul!
Angelic tolerance! Ah, were I sure
That you would treat *my* faults as leniently,
I should be almost tempted to——

MARTHA.

To what?
Oh, sir, you're surely jesting!

MEPHISTO.

Not at all.
(*Aside*) I'd better change the subject. This old girl
Would take the very devil at his word.
They're coming back.
(*Aloud*) We'll talk of this anon—
After a year—or two—or three—

MARTHA.

We will !

[*Exeunt together, as FAUSTUS and GRETCHEN appear at back.*]

FAUSTUS.

That, Gretchen, was *my* dream.

GRETCHEN.

Oh, marvellous !

That thou and I—each stranger to the other—
Should thus have peopled each the other's vision !
I tremble when I think on't.

FAUSTUS.

Wherefore so ?

Was then the vision so distasteful ?

GRETCHEN.

Nay,

I said not so ; but that we two should dream
As we have dreamt—'tis not in nature !

FAUSTUS.

Promise

That if again thou seest me in a dream
Thou'lt tell me all—the part I play therein—
The words I speak to thee, and thou to me.

GRETCHEN (*confused*).

Perhaps. It may be so. I will not promise.

FAUSTUS.

Tell me again—Gottfried—thou dost not love him?

GRETCHEN.

He is my brother, sir!

FAUSTUS.

So be he alway!

There is, perchance, some other envied man
To whom the flower of thine heart is given?

GRETCHEN.

Indeed, I have no lover, sir.

FAUSTUS.

None?

GRETCHEN.

None.

FAUSTUS.

Thy time will come!

GRETCHEN.

Perhaps!

FAUSTUS.

Give me thy hand—
I'll read thy fortune, Gretchen.

GRETCHEN.

Wonderful !

Canst thou read fortunes ? [*Giving her hand.*

FAUSTUS.

Aye, indifferent well. [*Playing with her hand.*

GRETCHEN.

Speak, sir, I listen.

FAUSTUS (*still playing with her hand*).

'Tis a soft white hand !

GRETCHEN (*demurely*).

My fortune, sir.

FAUSTUS (*recollecting himself*).

True, true, thy fortune ! Come.

[*Looking at her palm.*

Ah, Gretchen, Gretchen, be thou on thy guard !
There cometh one to woo thee. Oh, beware,
Take heed of him—he is no honest man !

GRETCHEN.

And do I know him, sir ?

FAUSTUS.

Aye, in some sort,
Thou knowest his smooth face, his specious
tongue ;
But there is that within his evil heart
Of which thou knowest little ! Oh, my child,
Beware of him ! My child, beware of him !

GRETCHEN.

Why comes this wicked man to such as I ?
I would not aid him in his wickedness.

FAUSTUS.

In sad and sorrowing heart he comes to thee,
That he may learn the lesson of thy life.
He comes to thee in the fond, foolish hope
That the pure influence of such love as thine
May quell the evil angel at his side ;
For wicked as he is, he loveth thee,
With all his poor frail heart he loveth thee !—

GRETCHEN.

'Tis a strange fortune! I, an untaught girl,
Can teach but little. But if such an one
Come to me sorrowing for his bygone sins,
E'en though I loved him not,
In pity I would strive, with all my heart,
To help him, even as I pray for help.
I do not know why I should fear this man.

FAUSTUS (*earnestly*).

Because, with all his sorrow, he is false—
False to himself, and, maybe, false to thee.
Oh, Gretchen, deal not lightly with my words ;
Weigh them, and weigh them, o'er and o'er again.
And when thou kneelest by thy bed to-night,
Pray thou for strength as thou hast never prayed ;
Pray for a brave and staunch and steadfast heart—
Steadfast to aid this poor weak wanderer
Upon the holy path that thou hast chosen.
But above all, beyond all, and before all,
Steadfast to pluck the traitor from thine heart,
If, in the depth of his mortality,
He strive to gain thee by unholy means !

GRETCHEN (*quietly*).

I will take heed, sir. [Rising and going.]

FAUSTUS.

Gretchen—leave me not.

GRETCHEN.

I go to seek a poor lost, friendless girl,
Who waits for me hard by. I thank you, sir—
I take your kindly counsel in good part.
Thou dost not know the sad and solemn lesson
That her poor blighted heart hath taught us all.
For she was wont to laugh as the birds sing,
From very wealth of idle happiness!
It seems so strange that she should not have died.

FAUSTUS.

God save thee from such harm! (*releasing her*).

GRETCHEN.

Amen! amen!

[Exit.]

[FAUSTUS stands as if entranced for a moment;
then suddenly

FAUSTUS.

Why, whither am I going? Grace of Heaven!
Have I been blind? Fool! poor, self-cheating fool!
Stop, while thou mayst—thine eyes are open now!
What seest thou?
Hell against Heaven—and thou allied with hell!

[MEPHISTOPHELES *appears and listens.*

What seest thou? A pure and blameless child,
Trustful as innocence—her gentle soul,
Calm as a lake in Heaven—her angel face,
God's work,
Untainted by man's desecrating touch!
And, at her side,
A scheming mummer, tricked in godly garb—
His tongue all plausible, his heart all false—
His lying manhood traitor to itself!
Faustus, mine enemy, I know thee now!
Faustus, mine enemy, I know thee now!

MEPHISTO.

Shake off thy churchman's qualms. Thou art a
man,
Wast once a soldier ere thou wast a priest.

Has monkish milk so curdled the hot blood
That bore thee ever where the fight was thickest,
That this raw girl—this butter-churning doll,
Hath turned thee chicken-hearted ?

FAUSTUS.

Hold thy peace,
Accursed fiend, nor dare to breathe *her* name.
Deal thou with me—let Heaven deal with Heaven,
I go from her—God shield her from all harm !

MEPHISTO.

Hush, not so loud, she'll hear you. See, she
comes !

[GRETCHEN *appears at back, picking petals from a
daisy as she advances.*

GRETCHEN.

He loves me—he loves me not !
He loves me—he loves me not !

MEPHISTO (*aside to FAUSTUS*).

Too late, too late ! her heart is given to thee ;
Her love is not as other women's love.
Take thyself hence and she will surely die !

[FAUSTUS *watches her, entranced.*

GRETCHEN (*with increased anxiety*).

He loves me—he loves me not !

He loves me—he loves me not !

MEPHISTO.

See how she trembles as the petals fall.

Poor child, poor child !

She trusts her simple charm, and should it fail,

Her heart will break ! Have pity on her, Faustus !

GRETCHEN.

He loves me—he loves me not !

He loves me—he loves me not ! (*she picks the last
petal*)

Oh, Heaven have mercy !

FAUSTUS (*breaking from MEPHISTOPHELES, and
rushing to her*).

Gretchen, dearly loved !

Mistrust thy charm ! By Heaven that hears me now,
He loves thee, Gretchen ! loves thee, loves thee,
loves thee !

[GRETCHEN *gives a cry of joy and surprise, then
falls weeping on his neck.* MEPHISTOPHELES
at back laughing cynically.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*A Market-place in a German town.*

*Entrance to Church on right of Stage. A
Stone Cross on the left.*

BESSIE, BARBARA, and AGATHA discovered, conversing. *Three months have elapsed.*

AGATHA.

Gottfried returned !

BESSIE.

Aye, and a captain, too ;
All steel and gold ! I hear the people say
That in the ranks of those who fought and bled,
No braver soldier lives !

BARBARA (*maliciously*).

Alas, poor Gottfried !

BESSIE.

Poor Gottfried ! To have gained such poverty
I'd given ten years—aye, though it made me thirty !

BARBARA.

Fool ! He is head and ears in love with Gretchen !
There's but a bitter time in store for him.

BESSIE.

Ah, 'tis a sorry thing this love !

AGATHA.

For that,
The world, without it were a sorry thing !
It's meat and drink to me ! (*sighing*).

BARBARA (*to BESSIE*).

Thou foolish child,
Reville not that of which thou knowest naught.
Some day, maybe—observe, I say *may be*—
Some one will love *thee*—strange things come to
pass—
And then thou'lt change thy note.

BESSIE.

If so, I pray
'Twill not be such an one as that gay knight.
Who hath so wondrously bewitched our Gretchen !
But three months since, no happier maiden lived ;

And now—kind Heaven help us all!—they say
She will not live to see her twentieth year!

[*Enter LISA, unobserved.*

BARBARA.

Girls do not die of honest-hearted love.
(*Maliciously*) They sometimes die of shame and
penitence,
When love has carried them beyond themselves.

LISA (*coming forward*).

Foul shame on thee who darest couple shame
With the most pure and perfect heart on earth!
May Heaven pardon thee thy bitter words.
I'll stake my soul upon her innocence!

BARBARA.

Thy stake is small—in that thou shewest wisdom.
Thou shouldst be an unerring judge of guilt.
But as to innocence—leave innocence
To those who know the meaning of the word.

LISA.

Rail on at me—I heed a mocking tongue
As little as I heed a winter's wind;

For misery hath hardened me to both.
But bow thy head, and stop thy shameless tongue,
When others speak of that pure angel heart,
Which, day by day, draws nearer to its heaven !

AGATHA (*looking off*).

See, see, the soldiers ! [*All look off.*]

BESSIE.

Marry, how they march !

I love a soldier ?

AGATHA (*sighing*).

I love several !

[*Enter the SOLDIERS, led by FRIEDRICH, and accompanied by MEN and GIRLS. They halt in line, in front of Cathedral, at FRIEDRICH'S word.*]

AGATHA.

There's Karl !

BARBARA.

And Otto !

BESSIE.

Max !

AGATHA.

And Friedrich, too !

Oh, what a beard !

[GOTTFRIED *enters, dressed as an officer.*

GOTTFRIED.

Break off !

[*They recover pikes and break off, mingling with the crowd.*

Whom have we here ?

Why, Agatha ! and Bessie ! Barbara !

[*They crowd around him as he greets them.*

How fares it with you ? Are you married yet ?

[*They sigh and shake their heads.*

What none of you ? Well, there are plenty here
To set that right !

AGATHA.

Sir, welcome home again !

BESSIE.

And you're a captain !

GOTTFRIED (*laughing*).

Yes, unworthily !

FRIEDRICH.

Nay, never credit that. There never lived
A doughtier soldier !

BARBARA.

How came it to pass ?

GOTTFRIED.

My faith, I hardly know. 'Twas sheer good luck.
We were at rest around a big camp fire,
Dreaming, maybe, of loved ones far away,
When came a sudden trumpet-call—to horse !
Another moment saw us in the saddle,
And tearing on—we knew not why nor whither.
Then came a shock of strong men breast to
breast—
A clash of swords—a hurricane of blows—
I on my back, half blind with blood and rage,
A thousand devils dancing in my eyes,
And friends and foes in wild entanglement,
All tussling for my body—then, a wrench—
A mighty shout—another rush, and lo,
A panting dozen of us on a hill,
Besmirched with blood and dust, and all agog

To grasp my hand and hail me as a hero! [*Rises.*
That's all I know of it, except that I
Went in a trooper, and came out a captain!

[*Several SOLDIERS stroll off with GIRLS. A*
SOLDIER remains with BESSIE, another with
BARBARA, FRIEDRICH with AGATHA.

GOTTFRIED.

But there—enough of that! Come tell me now
(*Anxiously*) How fares my cousin Gretchen—is
she well?

BESSIE (*confused*).

Yes, yes—that is—(*aside to SOLDIER*) How shall
I answer him?

GOTTFRIED.

Is aught amiss?

BESSIE.

How well thou carriest
Thy new-born rank!

GOTTFRIED (*impatiently*).

The devil take my rank!

Tell me of Gretchen!

[*BESSIE, at fault, watches her opportunity, and*
exit with SOLDIER.

BARBARA.

Prithee, ask us not,
We would not say a word to give thee pain
On such a day. [Exit with SOLDIER.

GOTTFRIED (*amazed*).

Pain !

AGATHA.

Nay—be not distressed,
All may be well.

GOTTFRIED (*with sudden eagerness*).

She lives ?

AGATHA.

Yes, yes ! she lives !

(To FRIEDRICH) Oh, come away—I dare not tell
him more !

GOTTFRIED.

Why, how is this ? A curse upon the fools !
Where are their tongues ? Is aught amiss with
her ?

At the bare thought of it my heart stands still !

FRIEDRICH.

Nay, never heed them—girls are all alike—
Mere jealous jades ! Thy first and foremost
thoughts
Were for another. There's the mischief of it.
Hadst thou but spoken lightly of thy cousin
A shower of praise would have been poured upon
her !

GOTTFRIED.

A plague upon their scurril serpent-tongues !
In the old days they knew no jealousy.
My blood is all a-chill ! I shake with fear !
I'll to her house at once, and ere an hour,
I'll learn the best and worst ! [Exit.

AGATHA.

Alas, poor Gottfried !

FRIEDRICH.

It's a strange world ! Here is a plain, shrewd
fellow,
With so much simple sense that when he hears
Of hearts and homes laid waste through misplaced
faith,

Uplifts his hands in wonderment to think
That men can be such fools ; and, thanking
Heaven
That he is not as blind as others are,
He trusts a pretty woman to his friend.

AGATHA.

But see, she comes ! Quick ! take me hence
away.

[*Enter FAUSTUS and GRETCHEN, lovingly. GRETCHEN, seeing AGATHA, advances to speak to her. AGATHA turns about, and exit quickly with FREIDRICH.*

GRETCHEN.

Oh, Faustus, didst thou see ? She turned from
me !

FAUSTUS.

Nay, nay, she saw thee not.

GRETCHEN.

She saw me well !
They shun me, one and all. Where'er I go,
My loved companions look at me askance,

And then, with sidelong looks and pitying words,
They whisper to each other of my shame !

FAUSTUS.

Nay, calm thy fears. They do not speak of thee.

GRETCHEN.

Oh, Faustus, Faustus,
I know the purport of their whispered words,
As though they had been spoken trumpet-tongued !

FAUSTUS.

Nay, never heed them, Gretchen.

GRETCHEN.

Never heed them !

They were my world before thou cam'st to me.
They loved me, Faustus, and they honoured me.
And now they turn away from me, as though
I bore a deadly poison in my glance !

FAUSTUS.

Dismiss them from thy thoughts. We will go hence
To some far distant land where none shall know us,
And there the bond of all-forgiving Heaven
Shall sanctify our love.

GRETCHEN.

Oh, Faustus, Faustus,
I have thine heart ?

FAUSTUS.

For ever, and for aye !

GRETCHEN.

Ah, Heaven is kind to me, for all my sin !
For when my heart is more than common sad,
I need but close my eyes—and all at once,
I wander at my will amid the days
When thou and I may face the world again.
And yet I am no fitting mate for thee.
Thou, a great lord—rich, honoured, and beloved—
I, a poor simple, untaught, peasant girl !
Yet bear with me—my love shall plague thee little,
Though ever and anon I come to thee,
With faltering step and tearful downcast eyes,
A timid suppliant for such alms of love
As thou in thy goodwill mayst grant to me.
So, when thou seest, kneeling at thy feet,
Thy poor, mad, love-sick, trusting, trembling wife,
Throw her in charity one little flower

Out of the boundless garden of thy heart,
That she may go rejoicing on her way.

FAUSTUS.

Thou art, indeed, no fitting mate for me—
Thou, glorious in the sheen of innocence,

[She covers her eyes.]

I, devil-taught in all unholy art !
Oh, Gretchen, dearly loving—dearly loved—
Wronged beyond all repair, yet all forgiving,
The simple utterance of thy trusting heart
Is terrible to my unhallowed soul
As the proclaimed doom of angered Heaven !

GRETCHEN.

Hush ! hush !
I will not suffer thee to utter treason
Against my lord. I am but his handmaiden.
Yet I am jealous of my master's honour
As of his love.

FAUSTUS.

Ah, Gretchen, if his honour
Were trusty as his love, thy jealousy
Might slumber unto death !

GRETCHEN (*anxiously*).

But tell me, Faustus,
When first thou camest to me in the vision,
Hadst thou then loved?

FAUSTUS (*sighing*).

Aye, Gretchen, verily!

GRETCHEN.

With all thy heart?

FAUSTUS.

Alas, with all my heart!

GRETCHEN (*sadly*).

Would Heaven that I had been the first!

FAUSTUS.

Amen!

GRETCHEN.

And when she learnt that thou hadst love for me,
Did her heart break?

FAUSTUS.

Nay, nay—her love had died
A year before. She fled from me, and I,

In a mad frenzy, born of shattered hopes,
Gave up the world, and sought forgetfulness
In the cold cloisters of a monastery.
For twelve long months, twelve weary, weary
months,
I strove to keep my ill-considered vows,
Till, wearying of the sacrilegious lie,
I broke my bonds, and cast my priesthood from
me.

GRETCHEN (*aghast*).

Faustus! thou art a priest? No, no! no, no!
My senses cheat me, or thou mockest me!

FAUSTUS.

If the mere letter of a reckless vow
Could make me priest, I was a priest indeed.
If vows cast off and scattered to the wind
Can free me from my priesthood, I am free.

GRETCHEN (*dazed*).

Thou art a priest! and vowed to Heaven!

(*Suddenly*) Why then—!

Oh God preserve me! I am lost indeed!

Oh, grace of Heaven, have mercy on me now!

Oh, take me hence ! oh, free me from my life !
What have I done !

[Crossing and falling at foot of cross, and clinging to it.]

O Heaven, pity me !
I knew it not ! thou knowest I knew it not !

FAUSTUS (*kneeling over her*).

Gretchen, in Heaven's eyes I am no priest—
Apostate, if thou wilt ; but still no priest.
If there be power in boundless love to heal
The wound that I have opened in thy heart,
That boundless love is thine.

GRETCHEN (*clinging to cross, and shrinking from him*).

Thou art a priest ;
Thou hast a bride—thy Church ! Thy vows are
plighted,
And thou hast cheated her ! Away ! away !
Lose not a moment—get thee hence to her—
Upon thy knees confess thy faithlessness,
That she may take thee to her heart again !

Be brave—go thou from my unhallowed arms
Back to the heavenly bride from whom thou
camest !

FAUSTUS.

Gretchen, be merciful—have pity on me—
Think of our love—I know thou lovest me.
Think of the shame that must await thee here,
If thou art left, unfriended and alone,
To bear the burden I have placed on thee.

GRETCHEN.

Think not of me—thy wrong to me is naught—
Thy wrong to injured Heaven is all in all !
Go, make thy peace with her while yet thou
mayest.
In the rich plenitude of her great heart
Thy bride may pardon thee ! Oh, Faustus
Faustus !

Thou lovest my body, and I love thy soul !
Oh, be thou brave as I ! If I can go
From the enduring heaven of thy love
To shame and misery unspeakable,
Canst thou not yield such mortal heart as mine,
For the pure love of an eternal bride ?

FAUSTUS.

Too late—my love for thee is all supreme—
And while thou livest, as Heaven hears me now,
I'll leave thee not !

GRETCHEN.

Faustus, be not deceived.

I love thee with my heart—my heart of hearts—
My very death prayer shall be breathed for thee ;
But, though it rend my heart to keep my vow,
As there is pardon for a penitent,
I will not meet thine eyes on earth again !
Nay, touch me not ! God pardon thee ! Fare-
well ! [Exit.

FAUSTUS.

My doom is spoken and I bow my head.
So, Gretchen, let it be ! At thy just bidding
I go to death in life. There is a tomb
In which a living, loving man may bury
All but his aching heart. I go to it !

MEPHISTO *has entered and overheard this.*

MEPHISTO.

Why, how is this ? does not the good work
prosper ?

Come, come, take heart—'tis but a summer storm—

A day, alone, will bring her to her senses.

FAUSTUS.

Fiend, I renounce thee! Give me back myself.

Let me go hence; our bond is at an end!

MEPHISTO.

Nay, that's ungenerous—it is, indeed.

You are a churchman—my profound respect

For all your cloth induced me to forego

The customary writing. Satisfied

That I was dealing with a holy man,

I asked no bond—I trusted to your honour.

And now, to take advantage of my weakness,

And turn my much misplaced credulity

Against myself—nay, 'tis unworthy of you!

FAUSTUS.

Poor mocker, hold thy peace—let me go hence,

Back to my cloister, back to the old blank life!

My eyes are open and I see the gulf,

The broad, black gulf, deep as the nether hell,

To which thou ledest me ! Release thy grasp—
My heart is changed. Thou hast no hold on me—
Accursed of God—our bond is at an end !

[Breaks from him and rushes into the church.

MEPHISTO (*moving after him, but drawing back
at sight of the church*).

The blight of hell upon thy head, false priest !
False priest ? True priest ! true to the lying
trade

That I have taught thy smug-faced brotherhood !
The old, old doom ! My sword against myself !
As once it was, so ever must it be !

Well, go thy ways !

Go to thy kennel, dog Dominican,*

And gnaw the fleshless bones of thy dead joy !

The end has yet to come, and Time's my friend.

But, oh ! just Heaven,

Is the fight fair, when this, mine enemy,

May traffic with me till his end is gained,

Then steep his chicken-soul in penitence,

* The Dominicans were stigmatised as "*Domini Canes*"—dogs
of the Lord.

And cheat damnation? So it comes to pass
I gather fools, blind fools, and only fools!
Oh, for the soul of one wise man—but one—
To show, in triumph, at the Reckoning!

Enter GOTTFRIED.

GOTTFRIED.

My search is vain—she is not at her home.
Well, patience, patience! I must wait for her
As best I may! (*sees* MEPHISTO.) So, so; whom
have we here?
Surely I know this worthy gentleman?

MEPHISTO.

Your humble servant, sir!

GOTTFRIED.

'Tis Faustus' friend.

MEPHISTO.

His very loving friend. But welcome home—
Fame has been busy with your worship's valour.

GOTTFRIED (*anxiously*).

Sir, you can give me news of cousin Gretchen.
Is the maid safe and well?

MEPHISTO.

Why, as to "well,"
What loving maid is ever in rude health,
When he who has her heart is far afield?
But as to "safe"—why, have you not a friend
Who's sworn to keep a watch upon her safety?
And is not that friend Faustus? Have more
faith!

GOTTFRIED.

True, true. He has watched over her?

MEPHISTO.

He has,
Most conscientiously. He never leaves her.

GOTTFRIED.

I breathe again! My heart had sunk within me.
I asked some village girls an hour ago
For news of her. Well, this one shook her
head,
And that one sighed; a third looked dubious,
Uncertain whether she should shake or sigh,
Then finally did both. I breathe again.

MEPHISTO.

The maid is well—a little pale, perhaps.
But then, poor child—her lover at the wars!
'Twas hardly fair to leave her as you did,
With a mere cold “good-bye.”

GOTTFRIED.

Why, as for that,
I have no claim, alas, to rank as lover.

MEPHISTO.

Ah, pardon me—I know the maiden's heart.

GOTTFRIED.

Sir, you are jesting!

MEPHISTO.

Jesting? Not at all.

For two months past, the town, from end to end,
Has known no topic but your worship's valour;
And while she trembled for your well-being,
Her bosom swelled with pride when brave men
told
Of Gottfried's chivalry. Oh, mark my words,
You have gained more promotion than you wot of!

GOTTFRIED.

Can this be true?

MEPHISTO.

Quite true—but see, she comes.

With your permission, and no doubt you'll grant
it,

I will withdraw—but ere I take my leave,
Allow me to congratulate you both
On the great happiness in store for you.

GOTTFRIED.

You're more than good!

MEPHISTO.

Some people seem to think so,
But then they flatter me—ha! ha! Good day!
[Exit.

GOTTFRIED.

At last! at last! Why, how I tremble! Strange!
I am but little moved at thought of death.
I've stared his kingship out of countenance
A dozen times a day.
But, in the presence of this gentle child,

My well-beloved and loving kinswoman,
I am no better than a shaking coward !

Enter GRETCHEN.

GOTTFRIED.

Gretchen ! At last !

GRETCHEN (*amazed*).

Gottfried !

GOTTFRIED.

Aye, home again !

Hale, sound and whole, with money in my purse,
And a good sounding title to my name,
So give me joy of it. Why, how is this ?
Hast thou no welcome for me, cousin Gretchen ?

GRETCHEN (*with an effort*).

Aye, welcome home, dear Gottfried ! welcome
home !

GOTTFRIED.

But wherefore dost thou sigh ?

GRETCHEN.

Nay, heed me not,
But tell me of thyself—the country side
Rings with the tidings of thy valour.

GOTTFRIED.

Bah !

I am no hero, Gretchen, in myself—

A plain, rude man, with just so much of sense

As to go gladly two leagues round about

To save a broken crown ; who loves not blood—

Unless, indeed, it be his own, and that

He loves too well to lose it willingly !

So, cousin Gretchen,

If there be aught of valour in my deeds,

The merit of it is thine own, not mine.

GRETCHEN.

Mine, Gottfried ? mine ?

GOTTFRIED.

Aye, for it came from thee !

It lives for thee, and it will die with thee !

Gretchen, my dearly-loved—

GRETCHEN.

Oh, Gottfried ! Gottfried !

GOTTFRIED.

For many a year, at home and far away,

I've had thee at my heart, but did not dare

To speak to thee of love. Misjudge me not—
I do not blush that I have loved thee, Gretchen.
God sent such truth and virgin innocence
To teach rough men how holy love may be.
Let that man blush (if such an one there live)
Who knows thy maiden heart and loves thee not.
I would not be that man !
But if, in giving tongue to my dumb love,
I overstep the bounds of reverence,
Look down in pity on my poor mad heart;
And tell me gently that for man to hope
For more than sister-love from such as thou
Is more than man should dare—and I'll believe it !

GRETCHEN.

Gottfried, have mercy on me and be silent !
Dear Gottfried—brother, be my brother still !
Oh, be my brother—I have need of thee !
Such need ! Oh, Heaven pity me, such need !

GOTTFRIED.

Gretchen, my sister, if no more than brother,
Then always brother, now as heretofore !

Why dost thou weep? Nay, nay, take heart
again.

Tell me thy sorrow.

GRETCHEN (*aghast*).

Tell it unto *thee*?

No, not to thee! I have my punishment.

If thou hast love for me—I know thou hast—

Go, pray with all thy heart for such as I.

If thou hast pity—and I know thou hast—

Ask me no more, but go and pray for me!

GOTTFRIED.

Well, be it so. Enough that thou hast cause

To hide thy grief. May Heaven lighten it!

I seek to know no more. My love for thee

Is deathless as the faith it feeds upon!

GRETCHEN.

Thy love for me comes of thy faith in me?

Gottfried!

Let thy love die! Uproot it from thine heart;

It feeds on falsehood! Oh, uproot the weed;

It hath no place amid the God-grown flowers—

Truth, steadfast honour, simple manliness—
That blossom in that goodly garden-land.
Let thy love die, brave heart; I am unworthy!

GOTTFRIED (*horror-struck*).

Gretchen! what sayest thou?

Unworthy? And of what? Of such as I?

(*after a pause.*)

God help me if I read thy words aright!

Thou, Gretchen, thou? No, no—it could not be!

Thou, Gretchen? Oh, mankind is not so base!

GRETCHEN.

Oh, Gottfried, pity me—my heart is broken!

GOTTFRIED.

Oh, my poor love—my gentle angel-heart!

O death, kind death—thou that canst surely strike,

Hadst thou no pity on this poor fair flower?

O death, kind death,

Would Heaven's mercy *thou* hadst been at hand,

To fold my darling in thy sheltering wings!

(*With sudden fury*) His name? Quick! quick!

His name!

GRETCHEN (*wildly*).

Nay, ask me not !

In this have mercy !

GOTTFRIED (*drawing his sword*).

Quick—his name, I say !

GRETCHEN.

No, no—ah, Gottfried, spare him !

GOTTFRIED.

Quick—his name !

GRETCHEN.

He loved me, Gottfried—spare him—he is gone.

Oh, Gottfried, Gottfried—I—(*Falls senseless at his feet*).

GOTTFRIED.

Come hither, all !

[*During these lines the SOLDIERS, FRIEDRICH and GIRLS have entered.*

His name, give me his name ! (*they turn away*)

Why, how is this ?

Why turn you from me, comrades ? Have you heard ?

FRIEDRICH.

Aye, Gottfried, we have heard.

GOTTFRIED.

A curse on you!

Why hold you back his name?

FRIEDRICH.

In mercy to thee.

GOTTFRIED (*seizing him and threatening him*).
Have mercy on thyself! Am I in mood
To play with words? I charge thee on thy life,
Give me his name.

FRIEDRICH.

Then steel thy heart to hear it.
They say it was thy friend!

GOTTFRIED.

My friend?

FRIEDRICH.

Aye, Faustus!

GOTTFRIED.

Faustus? My friend? They lie!

BARBARA.

Alas, alas !

She hath confessed the truth !

GOTTFRIED.

Oh, earth and Heaven !

Are there no bounds to human devil-hood ?

Are Heaven's weapons sheathed ? Is honour
dead ?

Has innocence cast off her majesty ?

[Unhooks his scabbard and breaks it.]

Away ! away ! I have no need of thee !

Good, trusty sword, henceforth sheathless thou

Until I home thee to the very hilt

In the foul slough of his accursed heart—

His heart, and then—mine own !

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

Room in MARTHA'S cottage; a couch in recess of window. Night. A small lamp burning on pedestal table at head of couch.

Enter LISA from without, meeting MARTHA.

MARTHA (*anxiously*).

Well, hast thou seen the holy Anselm?

LISA.

Yes;

Yet but one moment I had been too late.

Old Karl is dying, and the holy man,

Being called in haste to minister to him,

Was on the eve of starting as I came.

MARTHA (*testily*).

Old Karl, must he needs die this very night!

But thou didst tell the holy man that Gretchen

Was sorely ill, and stood in urgent need

Of his most comfortable ministry?

LISA.

Yes, yes. Alas, that it should be the truth !
He promised he would come without delay.
How fares our loved one ? Is her mind at rest ?

MARTHA.

Alas, I fear that death draws nigh apace !
There is a strange look in her wondering eyes
That is not of this world—a bright calm light,
As though she saw far, far beyond the grave.
When she is taken, Heaven help the poor !
There's not an ailing soul for miles around
Who does not bless her ministering hand !

LISA.

If the old tale be true, when such as she
Are taken hence to their appointed heaven,
Good angels come to earth to take their place
And finish their good works ; and so the poor
Who looked to them are clothed and comforted,
The hungry fed, the sick and dying healed.

MARTHA.

Her work is all her own, and would be so
Though Heaven sent the best of all good angels !

[GRETCHEN *appears at door, dressed in white.*
She is pale and weak.

GRETCHEN.

Lisa, thy hand !

LISA.

Gretchen, what dost thou here ?

GRETCHEN.

My heart is sad. I cannot rest in peace.

MARTHA.

But thou shouldst not have left thy bed, dear child.
The night is cold.

GRETCHEN.

Alas, it matters little !
The end is near—the tale is nearly told.

LISA.

Nay, nay—not yet ! not yet ! O Gretchen,
Gretchen !

While life remains to thee, pray thou for life !

Oh ! pray, pray, pray !

For Heaven hears the prayers of such as thou.

Oh, mercy, mercy on my misery !

How shall I live without thy saving love ?
How shall I die when thou art gone from me ?
Oh ! Gretchen, stay with us, oh ! stay with us !
As thou, in the rich love of thy great heart,
Didst look in pity on my bygone sin,
Have mercy on the love I live upon,
And pray for life ! O Gretchen, pray for life !

GRETCHEN.

Lisa,
I looked in pity on thy bygone sin
In the poor pride of an untempted heart,
As one to whom such sorrow could not come.
I looked upon such unknown sin as thine
As a rich queen might look upon starvation—
In pitying wonder that such things could be.
And now—
God pardon me, as thou wast, so am I !

LISA.

But Gretchen, think of him, he loveth thee !
His heart is all thine own, oh, live for him !
O Gretchen, for his sake, if not for ours !
Remember him—his life's in thy hands !

GRETCHEN.

Remember him !

Aye, I remember him ! Had I the power
To blot him from my aching memory,
Even as I have torn him from my heart,
Then I could die in hope !

MARTHA.

Ah ! Gretchen, Gretchen,
Pray Heaven thy love *be* dead !

GRETCHEN.

I have no love.
There is no biding place for earthly love
Within a heart rent with the agony
Of sacrilege, unpardoned, unatoned.
Her minister ! her chosen instrument !
And I——O Heaven, have mercy on my soul !
I knew it not—thou knowest I knew it not !

[*Falls weeping on the couch.*]

MARTHA.

Who knocks ?

LISA (*opening door*).

'Tis Father Anselm.

Enter ANSELM, *followed by* FAUSTUS, *who is in a monk's dress, his face hidden by his cowl.*

ANSELM.

Benedicite !

Is this the poor sick maid who seeks our aid ?

[*To* GRETCHEN, *who is still sobbing.*

Nay, dry thy tears, my child ; however grave

Thy burden, Heaven's grace will lighten it.

(*To* MARTHA) Old Karl is even at the point of death,

And I must go to him ; but take good heart ;

This holy father will abide with her

Until I come again. The old man's house

Is near at hand ?

MARTHA.

Good father, follow me

And I will lead thee thither.

ANSELM.

Be it so.

[*Exeunt* ANSELM and MARTHA. *Exit* LISA *by another door.* GRETCHEN *weeping at couch.*

FAUSTUS (*removing his cowl*).
Gretchen!

GRETCHEN (*starting up amazed*).
Thou here! O Faustus, get thee hence.
Have I not sinned enough, that thou hast come
To fill my dying heart with thoughts of thee?
I am not thine! Go, leave me to myself.

FAUSTUS.
As stands a felon at the judgment seat,
Bent with the burden of his published shame,
Stand I before thee!

GRETCHEN.
I am not thy judge.

FAUSTUS.
I have been judged, and to my life-long doom
I bow. Yet by the love of long ago—
By the pure days when yet that love was young,
Shed but one ray of light—one gleam of hope
Upon the darkness of my dungeoned soul!

GRETCHEN.
What wouldst thou with me? Speak, my hour is
brief.

FAUSTUS.

Time was when every tongue was eloquent
With legends of thy God-sent charity.

Gretchen,

Of all the starving crowd thy hands have fed,
Never was wretch so famine-worn as I.
Of all the agony thy words have soothed,
Never soothed they such agony as mine!
I come to thee, as others came to thee,
In shame and sorrow—hungry and athirst,
For pity and for pardon.

GRETCHEN.

Oh, Faustus, is it meet that thou and I,
Two trembling sinners, guilty hand in hand,
Should ask each other's mercy? Who am I
That I should deal in pardons?

FAUSTUS (*wildly*).

What am I

That I should live unpardoned? Hear my prayer,
And save me from myself. Thy love is dead.
So let it rest—'tis fit that it should die.
I would not raise it from its solemn grave

For all the joy that it would bring to me.
I pray thy pity, Gretchen, not thy love.

GRETCHEN.

Kneel thou to Heaven, and not to such as I;
So shall thy pardon come from that great Source
From which alone can pardon profit thee.
My time is brief—I have to make my peace!
[*Exit.*

FAUSTUS.

Gone! And with her, my only hope on earth!
Oh Heaven send me my death—send me my death,
And all that follows death! Am I to live
With this black blight upon my tortured soul.
Or carry with me into dark old age
The canker of an unforgiven sin?
Curse not the word with my unhallowed life,
Or me, with life on this thy goodly world!
Send me my death, O Heaven—send me my death!
[*Falls sobbing on table. Door opens, and GOTT-
FRIED enters, with sword drawn, and another
in his hand. He pauses, advances to FAUSTUS,
strikes him heavily on the shoulder, and puts
one sword on table.*

GOTTFRIED.

Sleeper, awake ! Thine hour or mine has come !

FAUSTUS (*starting and turning round*).

Gottfried !

GOTTFRIED.

Aye, Gottfried ! Oh, mine enemy !

Arise, destroyer ! Thou that layest waste
The flowers of Heaven with thy plague-laden
blast !

Thou devil-wielded scourge ! Thou thief of souls !
Make thine account with God—thy course is run !

FAUSTUS.

Spare thou thy barbèd words for worthier foes.
There is a voice within my tortured heart
To whose anathemas thine utterance
Is but a kindly whisper. Use thy sword !

GOTTFRIED.

Then strip thy monkish frock, and take thy guard.
Strip off thy frock, I say—or does it cling
More closely to thy limbs than heretofore ?
Time was when thou couldst cast thy slough at
will.

Has that time gone? or does thy craven heart
Seek sanctuary in a churchman's garb?

[*Involuntarily FAUSTUS grasps sword on table.*

Despair thy hope—the rag will serve thee not.
Monk or no monk, as Heaven defends the right,
To-night thou diest! so arm and take thy guard!

[FAUSTUS (*after a pause throws down sword.*)

Gottfried, I'll fight thee not. Thy cause is just.
I am a blot upon the fruitful world.
Away with me! I have no claim to live!

GOTTFRIED.

Defend thy life! Base as thy soul has shewn,
I would not be thine executioner;
Yet, by the rood, defence or no defence,
I will fulfil my mission. Take thy sword!
I know no mercy when I war with hell!

FAUSTUS (*passionately*).

Strike, Gottfried, strike! In the good days gone by
Thy loving hand was ever on the stretch
To aid me with a hundred offices,
The least of which should knit my heart to thine

As brother's heart to brother. Crown thy work.

[*Enter GRETCHEN ; she stands horrified.*

With this, the kindest of thy kindly deeds !

[*Tearing open his gown.*

Comrade in arms—brother in all but blood—

Here is my heart—kill the accursed thing,

It eats my flesh ! Strike surely and strike deep !

GOTTFRIED.

So be it then ! Thine hour has come ! Good sword,
That never yet shed undefended blood,

I pray thy pardon for the infamy

I place upon thee !

[*GOTTFRIED is about to strike. GRETCHEN staggers forward and places herself before FAUSTUS, with her arms extended to protect him.*

GRETCHEN.

Gottfried ! stay thy hand,

Or slay me with him ! Oh, for shame, for shame !

Is this thy love for me ? He is to me

As I to thee, and wouldst thou prove thy love

By slaying him to whom my heart is given ?

Gottfried !

I place thy brotherhood upon the test,
And by that test, so shall it stand or fall.
If it be free from the base taint of earth,
As I believe it, from my heart, to be,
It will arise unshaken from the proof.
If it be as the love of other men,
Slay him—and me! (*kneeling to him*) My
brother—oh, my brother !
I know thy love—this is its counterfeit,
I know thy love—thou wouldst lay down thy life
To add one hour to mine. Thou wouldst not rob
The few brief hours that yet are left to me !
Thou seest, I know thy love! Oh, brother,
brother,
Be strong in mercy ! Is his wrong to thee
Less than his wrong to me?—and I forgive him !
May Heaven have pity on my woman's heart.
I love this man !

GOTTFRIED (*after a pause*).

Go, sir—I spare thy life.

My heart has lost its vigour, and my hand
Is stayed against thee. Go ! thou knowest now

The virtue of her love—its alchemy
Hath made *thee* sacred in mine eyes! Go, sir,
Amend thy mis-spent life—she loveth thee!
When evil thoughts assail thine impious soul,
Remember that, despite thy wrong to her,
She loveth thee!
If a man's heart is beating in thy breast,
That amulet should hold thee Satan-proof!

[*Exit.*

FAUSTUS.

Gretchen, I thank thee for my granted life,
For it hath taught me that, for all my sin,
Thine heart is turned towards me. But for that,
'Twere better I had died by Gottfried's hand
Than by mine own!

GRETCHEN.

Faustus, thou shalt not die.
O Faustus, Faustus, *I* am marked for death—
Is not one life enough?

FAUSTUS.

Aye, verily,
So that that life be mine. I must atone!

GRETCHEN.

Thou shalt atone, for thou hast greatly sinned—
Thou shalt atone with worthy deeds lifelong;
Thou shalt atone with steadfast, humbled head,
With faith, and truth, and works of charity.
Atone with life—with brave and blameless life,
And not with coward death. Resign thyself.

[Enter LISA.

Heaven wills that thou shouldst live—that I
should die—

So let us yield ourselves to Heaven's will!

[GRETCHEN *grows gradually fainter*. FAUSTUS
leads her to couch.

Enter MARTHA and ANSELM.

MARTHA.

Too late! Oh, Heaven, too late!

LISA.

O Gretchen, Gretchen,
Poor loved one—speak to us—one word! one
word!
O Heaven, pity us!

GRETCHEN.

Nay, gentle one,

Weep not for Gretchen—three sad months ago
Poor Gretchen died ! 'Tis a long time to mourn,
Three months ! Nay, Martha, dry thine eyes again,
And deck thyself as for a holiday.

Rejoice with me—

The days of mourning for thy kinswoman
Are past and gone !

FAUSTUS.

O Gretchen—O my love—

My heart will break. Gretchen, tell me, at least,
That thou forgivest me !

*[Faint indications of coming daylight are seen
through window.]*

GRETCHEN.

I love thee, Faustus !

Ah me, but it is meet that I should die,
For I can turn my head, but not my heart—
And I can close mine eyes, but not my heart—
And still my foolish tongue, but not my heart—
So, Faustus, it is meet that I should die !
Weep not—

[FAUSTUS rises and turns towards ANSELM

I go from Death to Life—from Night to Day !
Weep not—my heart is glad, and all my cares
Fold their black wings and creep away abashed,
As shrinks the night before the coming dawn.

*[The lamp at her feet begins to die out. ME-
PHISTO is seen at door.]*

Farewell !

The hand of death is heavy on my heart,
The little lamp of life is dying out.
It matters not—the dreary Night is past,
And Daylight is at hand !

*[She raises her hands towards the rising sun,
which is seen through the window. Her hand
falls slowly and she dies, as the light at her
head goes out, and the sky is filled with the
splendour of the coming day. ANSELM, con-
soling FAUSTUS, raises his crucifix in the air.
MEPHISTO, at door, covers before it. During
GRETCHEN'S speech, the music of an organ is
heard faintly ; it swells into a loud peal as
GRETCHEN dies.]*

THE END.



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